

San Antonio Audubon Society

# AUDUBON NEWS

A Conservation and Birding Club since 1954

Volume 55 Number 8

August 2009

## RED-EYED VIREOS

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Each June my wife and I travel north, leaving just as our own Texas birdsong season is fading. As if moving backwards in the season, we migrate to regions where the chorus still rings gloriously in the early northern dawns. A simple drive up Interstate 35 to Minnesota is the most direct route. This year, however, our route swung northeast to New York State where my nephews live. Because their school year runs later than ours, we did not arrive until the second half of June. By that time the dawn chorus in southern New York was already past its peak, but up in the Adirondack Mountains the birds were still in full song.

So it was we traveled from south to north and back again through different degrees and species of song. One song, however, was ubiquitous from the oppressive heat of Texas clear to the cool Adirondack dawn, the seemingly endless robin-like phrases of the Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*).

A bird guide of my youth (Petersen?) called this species “the most abundant bird in the Eastern Deciduous Forest.” What the Red-eyed Vireo may also be is “the most ubiquitous songbird of the New World.” Our two North American subspecies collectively breed from Alaska south through central and eastern Canada, in our Northern Rocky Mountain States and across almost all of the United States from the Great Plains east. A further nine subspecies collectively breed across South America from Columbia to Argentina.

At a time when there is justifiable concern over the declining status of many neotropical migrants, many North American populations of the Red-eyed Vireo appear to be holding their own or even increasing such that a traveler like myself can still find their song to be a constant across 2,000 miles of our continent.

Certainly the key to the relative success of the Red-eyed Vireo must be an innate adaptability to a variety of forest habitats. On the breeding grounds the species prefers deciduous forest or the deciduous fractions of mixed forest. Although most common in areas of unbroken canopy, some evidence suggests that the species fares better than do other forest species in fragmented habitat, even despite a range-wide susceptibility to cowbirds. Red-eyed Vireos in North America are long-distance migrants, traveling by night clear to the Amazon Basin. On the wintering grounds they are amenable to a variety of wooded habitats including mature rain forest, second growth, cultivated plantations and mangrove swamps.

Relatively sedate and drab of plumage, Red-eyed Vireos typically forage methodically in the canopy. Were it not for the persistent, summer-long singing of the males, the species might be even more overlooked than it commonly is. Red-eyed Vireos are ostensibly monogamous, the female constructing the pendent, cup-shaped nest and



(Continued on page 3)

## SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON CALENDAR

### MONTHLY MEETING

Thursday, August 6, 2009, 7:00 PM

**Presenter: Cecilia M. Riley**  
Executive Director,  
Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

**“Linking the Land, Birds, and People  
of the Gulf of Mexico Region”**

**Lion's Field, 2809 Broadway**  
(Mulberry at Broadway)

*August 1, Saturday, 8:00 AM*

#### **SAAS Field Trip to Hornsby Bend**

Meet leader Bob Doe at the public entrance to Hornsby Bend in Austin. From I-35 in south Austin, take highway 71 to the east just past the Bergstrom Airport to FM 973 at the stoplight. Turn left (north) and cross the river. The next driveway on the left will be the entrance to the Hornsby Bend sewage ponds and the Environmental Research Center. Driving time is about 1 1/2 hours from San Antonio. Bring water and insect repellent. Contact Bob at (830) 438-8399.

*August 2, Sunday, 7:30 AM*

#### **SAAS Field Trip to Rancho Diana**

Meet leader Gail Dugleby at the gate to the Rancho Diana Natural Area in Northwest Bexar County. Rancho Diana is home to a large population of endangered Black-capped Vireos. It is not yet open to the general public. Take Highway 16 (Bandera Road) through Helotes to Scenic Loop Road, turn right and go to Menchaca Road. Turn right on Menchaca and go to the end of the road. Please arrive on time as the gate will be closed after we enter. Bring bug spray and plenty of water. **Space is limited. For reservations** contact Georgina Schwartz at (210) 342-2073.

*August 8, Saturday, 7:30 AM*

#### **SAAS Beginner's Bird Walk**

Meet leader Dick Bartels at the Judson Nature Trail next to the Alamo Heights swimming pool. At the 5900 block of Broadway in Alamo Heights, turn west on Ogden to the first stop sign at Greeley Street. Turn

left on Greeley and after one block take a right on Viesca to a small parking lot on the left before the swimming pool. All are welcome; binoculars available. Contact Dick at (210) 828-2680.

*August 23, Sunday, 8:00 AM*

#### **Field Trip to San Antonio Zoo**

Meet leaders Patsy and Tom Inglet at the Zoo's education center entrance for early entrance and a tour of the many fascinating and interesting sights (some behind the scene) to be found at our Zoo. The education center entrance is approximately a half block east (to the right) of the main entrance. While some passes will be available, bring your Zoo memberships. Contact Patsy at (210) 698-8445.

### Other Birding Events

*August 15, Saturday, 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM*

#### **S.A. Botanical Garden Beginner's Bird Walk**

San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place. Meet at Carriage House. Fees: adults - \$7.00; seniors - \$5.00; children (under 12) \$4.00. Free for SABG members. See: [www.sabot.org](http://www.sabot.org).

*August 15, Saturday, 7:30 AM*

#### **Monthly Bird Walk at Hornsby Bend**

See directions at SAAS Field Trip to Hornsby Bend. See: [www.travisaudubon.org/fieldtrips.html](http://www.travisaudubon.org/fieldtrips.html).

#### **Mitchell Lake Audubon Center**

Regular hours for the general public are from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM on Saturdays and Sundays; call Center at (210) 628-1639 for other times. Directions: Exit South Loop 410 at Moursund Blvd (Exit 46); go south 0.7 mile to gate on left and ring buzzer for entry. Docent-led birding trips, \$3.00 for MLAC members, \$5.00 for non-members, are scheduled at **7:30 AM** on:

August 9, 2nd Sunday

August 11, 2nd Tuesday

August 16, 3rd Sunday

August 22, 4th Saturday (8:00 AM)

(Continued from page 1)

incubating the eggs. The male feeds the female during incubation and both sexes help raise the young. Except possibly in the Deep South, one brood per year is the norm.

The potential song repertoire of any individual male Red-eyed Vireo is remarkably complex. Unlike many songbirds, males in adjacent territories do not sing the same song types, each male having a distinct repertoire. Neither do males on adjacent territories appear to be able to recognize each others' songs, an ability which in many songbirds is thought to minimize conflict. The males sing with an extraordinary persistence, all day long early in the season, and then periodically during the day until August. These unusual behaviors may relate to the remarkable degree of extra-pair copulation observed in this species, such that in one study eleven of the nineteen young tested were fathered by males other than the ones paired to their mothers (this in sharp contrast to the related Blue-headed Vireo (*V. solitarius*) which seems a model of marital fidelity).

The inability of Red-eyed Vireos to distinguish the song of their neighbors may work to the advantage of another related species, the Philadelphia Vireo (*V. philadelphicus*). The song of this species is remarkably similar and both Philadelphia and Red-eyed males attempt to exclude each other from their territories. In cases of actual physical conflict, the smaller Philadelphia males generally lose. However, so similar is their song that it is believed that singing alone is most often sufficient to ward off neighboring Red-eyed males. ❁

~Mike Scully

## Birding Bits

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow is now "Nelson's Sparrow" and Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow has become "Saltmarsh Sparrow" in the AOU's 50th nomenclature supplement.

The San Antonio Botanical Garden is seeking volunteers to handwater during these dry days of summer. Contact Volunteer Coordinator Cindy Sims at [cindy.sims@sanantonio.gov](mailto:cindy.sims@sanantonio.gov) or call her at (210) 207-3261 or (210) 207-3270.

Phase I of the park segment portion of the San Antonio River Museum Reach project began on July 1st. Phase

I connects the Urban section which had its grand opening on May 30th to Brackenridge Park. The new hike and bike route begins at Josephine on the east side of the river, passes under US 281, proceeds along the Catalpa-Pershing ditch on the southern end of the golf course and connects into the new dedicated bike lanes on Avenue B (south of the Lion's Field). Anticipated completion of this connection to the park will be the end of 2009. Planning for Phase II which includes the eventual closing of Avenue A to public vehicular traffic should take 18 months.

Docent training for Mitchell Lake Audubon Center is an 8-week course that will be held Saturdays beginning on August 8, 2009 at 9:00 AM. Each session lasts three hours. Training includes the history of Mitchell Lake, bird and plant identification, wildlife management, nature center procedures, and educational nature interpretation. The cost to participate is \$35.00 and includes training and materials. Call (210) 628-1639

## PHOTO OF THE MONTH



*Yellow-billed Cuckoo*  
By Lee Pasquali

Please send your favorite birding photos to:  
[editor@saaudubon.org](mailto:editor@saaudubon.org)

## The Birding Scene June 2009

June is often perceived as the slowest month for birding during the year. Very little migration goes on and breeding birds keep a low profile. Despite this there were bird reports. On June 4, Derek Muschalek found a late Olive-sided Flycatcher at Friedrich Wilderness Park. There was also a singing Hutton's Vireo, two Black-and-white Warblers and four Golden-cheeked Warblers. Also on June 4, Bill Holliday reported the hatching of chicks to the resident Swainson's Hawks located off of Loop 410 on the North side of town.

Lora Reynolds led a San Antonio Audubon field trip to Stone Oak Park on June 6 and found a number of local breeders, including Painted Buntings, Eastern Phoebe and Yellow-billed Cuckoos. American Robins continue



to breed at Trinity University as reported by Jerry Hernandez. A male Scott's Oriole was seen in a birdbath on the far northwest side, near Boerne

Stage Road on June 10.

A Common Parakeet was heard calling at Warbler Woods on June 13. Lora Render had a male Ruby-throated Hummingbird in her yard on June 14, which set off a discussion on SATXbirds list server on the distribution of that species. The conclusion was, yes, Ruby-throats do occur all summer in the San Antonio area, but it's a good idea to watch for Broad-taileds and Anna's, as they both have similar colored throats.

There was then a report of a very tiny hummingbird, which turned out to be a Sphinx moth, an excellent hummingbird mimic!

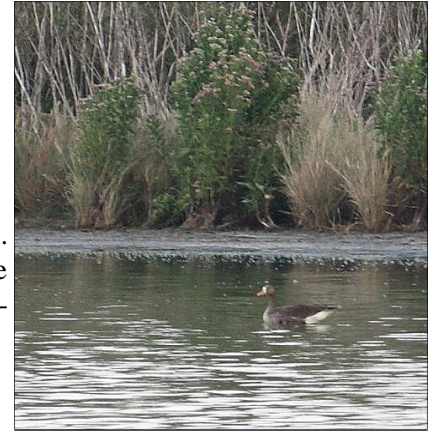
Georgina Schwartz led a field trip to Mitchell Lake on June 21. Despite a

lack of shorebirds, other than the local breeding Killdeer and Black-necked Stilts, a good number of birds



*Roseate Spoonbill by Marcin Kojka*

were seen. Black-bellied Whistling Ducks were the only ducks. Over one hundred American White Pelicans were seen. Snowy Egrets were abundant. Two Tricolored Herons were present. A lone Roseate Spoonbill was found. Passerines included four Bullock's Orioles, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Long-billed Thrashers, Painted and Indigo Buntings and Bell's Vireos. The biggest surprise was a Greater White-fronted Goose photographed by Lee Pasquali. ❁



*Greater White-fronted Goose  
by Lee Pasquali.*

~Sheridan Coffey

## Save the Date

Mark your calendars for the SAAS Annual Dinner on Thursday, October 1st at La Fonda Oak Hills. Our guest speaker this year will be Brent Ortego, wildlife diversity biologist with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (check out his website [www.ortegobirds.com](http://www.ortegobirds.com)). Details on the annual dinner will appear in the September newsletter.

SAAS Members: Please check your mailing label for the membership **renewal date!** Use the form on the back page or the online form at: [www.saaudubon.org/membership.html](http://www.saaudubon.org/membership.html) to renew or change your info. Members who get the pdf newsletter will receive a renewal reminder via email.

### SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON NEWS

Editor: Marilyn Williams

Contributing Editor and Mailing: Georgina Schwartz

Mailing Labels: Carol McCasland

The newsletter deadline is the 15th for the following month's issue. Please send submissions via email to [editor@saaudubon.org](mailto:editor@saaudubon.org).

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## Welcome New Members!

**William Fortenberry**----- (210) 499-0261  
PO Box 700308, San Antonio TX 78270-0308

**George Levoy** ----- (210) 524-9940  
PO Box 40308, San Antonio TX 78229-1308

**Frank, Dawn & Megan Smith** -- (210) 221-6693  
1 Staff Post Rd, Ft Sam Houston TX 78234-1303

**Reita P. Vander Zee** ----- (210) 822-0409  
680 E Basse Rd, Apt 122, San Antonio TX 78209

**Stephanie Sparkman** ----- (210) 530-4273  
4512 Brush Creek Dr., Schertz TX 78154

## Other Events

*August 1, Saturday, 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM*

### **Eisenhower Park Walk**

Beat the heat with a morning hike and learn about local flora, fauna, and geology. 19399 NW Military Hwy. Reservations are recommended as the hike will not be conducted if there are no pre-registered participants. Call (210) 564-6402 or (210) 372-9124. Participants are limited to 15 per hike. Meet at the restrooms near the parking lot. Bring water. A donation of \$2 per person is suggested. See: [www.sanaturalareas.org](http://www.sanaturalareas.org).

*August 8, Saturday, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM*

### **Eisenhower Park Second Saturday Program**

What's bugging you? Holly Camero leads our exploration into the world of the six-legged. 19399 NW Military Hwy. Reservations recommended. Program is in large gated pavilion. \$3.00/individual; \$5/family. Call (210) 564-6402 or (210) 372-9124. See: [www.sanaturalareas.org](http://www.sanaturalareas.org).

*August 15, Saturday, 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM*

### **Mitchell Lake Audubon Center**

Going batty with Kim Hoskins and Alec Ferguson. Kim is a volunteer for Bat Conservation International for over 20 years; Alec recently installed bat towers at Mitchell Lake. The program will discuss Texas bats, especially the Mexican Free-Tailed. They'll touch on their biology, benefits, and opportunities in our area to see them. Call (210) 628-1639.

## SAAS COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Education & Community Outreach Committee Report

Georgina Schwartz gave her Birds of the Area program twice in July: once to a group of residents at the Morningside Manor and again to several small groups of kids at the Circle School.

Would you like to be involved in a fun, rewarding activity in October? SAAS will be coordinating new interactive educational birding events at both the Mitchell Lake Fall Festival (Saturday, October 24th) and the San Antonio Botanical Garden's Botanical and Fall Garden Fair (Sunday, October 25th). We need more birding volunteers to participate at both events. Come out and assist us at these two great nature events. For more information or to sign up, please contact Barbara Kyse at 210-824-8884 or [info@saadubon.org](mailto:info@saadubon.org).

### Field Trip Committee Report

The Field Trip committee met July 8th to plan SAAS field trips for the remainder of 2009. Our schedule includes possible future field trips to several new out-of-town venues, such as Magic Ridge in October and Beeville in November. And we are looking into a combined Birding/Butterfly field trip perhaps to Choke Canyon for October. Watch the newsletter and website for announcements and details on upcoming SAAS field trips. If you have any suggestions for the Committee, please send them to chair Helen Rejzek at [fieldtrips@saasudubon.org](mailto:fieldtrips@saasudubon.org) or, alternately, to [info@saadubon.org](mailto:info@saadubon.org). Also, if you would like to either join the committee or lead a specific field trip, contact us.

Please note that upcoming SAAS plans do not include any overnight trips to the Valley. However, the Texas Ornithological Society's Winter meeting will be held in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (based in Weslaco) on January 15-18, 2010. Watch their website [www.texasbirds.org](http://www.texasbirds.org) for announcements on their winter meeting which should include some wonderful Valley birding opportunities. Save the date.

## FIELD TRIP REPORTS



### SAAS Beginner's Bird Walk, June 13

Don Person, a teacher visiting from Houston, wanted a bird walk as his birthday present so he came on our Beginner's Bird Walk at the Judson Nature Trails with his wife and his dad. He found 30 species starting with a pale blue parakeet-like bird hanging out on the ground with the doves. After that he found us an Eastern Wood-Pewee, a Mallard, a Green Heron, and several Yellow-crowned Night-Herons down by the creek, a Caracara, a Downy Woodpecker, several Golden-fronted Woodpeckers, and nesting Western Kingbirds. Connie Wheeler's 5 Boy Scouts did really well, but they left before we got to the trailhouse and the lemonade jug. Thanks to Joan Hall for helping the kids identify the birds. A total of 13 people showed up on this hot day.

~Georgina Schwartz

### Field Trip to Tobin Park, June 20

Sixteen birders turned out to walk Tobin Park. We had a nice morning and managed to see most of the nesting birds for our area. The most unusual ones were a mottled version of a Little Blue Heron and, unfortunately, a White-eyed Vireo feeding



*Tobin Park birders by Terry Nickel*

a Brown-headed Cowbird. We had the three woodpeckers: Ladder-backed, Golden-fronted, and Downy. We saw a Great Crested Flycatcher, a Western Kingbird, and a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks guarding a nest. We did not see the usual Barred Owls. We had visitors from Kansas and Boston. Thanks to everyone who came and helped spot the birds.

~Mariann Golden

### Field Trip to Medina River N.A., June 28

Seven birders joined me on the trip to Medina River Natural Area Park. Numbers were way down because of the drought. Highlights included

4 Yellow-billed Cuckoos, a Blue-gray Gnat-catcher, 3 Painted Buntings and two adult Eastern Phoebes feeding their nestlings in the Pavilion. Species Total: 22.

~Helen Rejzek

### SAAS Beginner's Bird Walk, July 11

"It's 9:30 already and I am having fun!" That was music to my ears at the Olmos Park picnic area with 2 newcomers from Virginia. They were great birders and our Edwards Plateau species were all new to them. What a pleasure to introduce them to some of our local birds, such as Ladder-backed and Golden-fronted Woodpeckers, Black-crested Titmouse, and Inca Dove. We were glad to get back to the lemonade jug on this hot day and tabulate our 27 species. Best birds include Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron spotted among the twigs, several Downy Woodpeckers (rare in summer on the checklist), Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, a group of 18 Chimney Swifts, and lot of young Northern Mockingbirds everywhere. Thanks to Patsy and Tom Inglet for helping to find all these great birds.

~Georgina Schwartz

## SAAS Annual Picnic

A group of 23 braved the heat on Saturday, the 4th of July, to attend the SAAS picnic at the Judson Nature Trails. We enjoyed good food and great company as we sat under the trees and talked about anything and everything. Conversations would stop occasionally to point out this or that bird heard or seen. In spite of the record temperatures we were all pleasantly surprised at how comfortable it was in the shade. It was also a treat to have several young family members attend. Thanks to the SAAS board for organizing the event especially our President, Barbara Kyse and our Board Chairman, Mariann Golden and to everyone who brought a covered dish. Food was excellent, as always. 🌻



~Sandi Wheeler

## Judson Nature Trail Report Summer 2009

The extreme heat and lack of rain have left the trails dry and dusty but early mornings and evenings are still comfortable on the tree shaded trails.

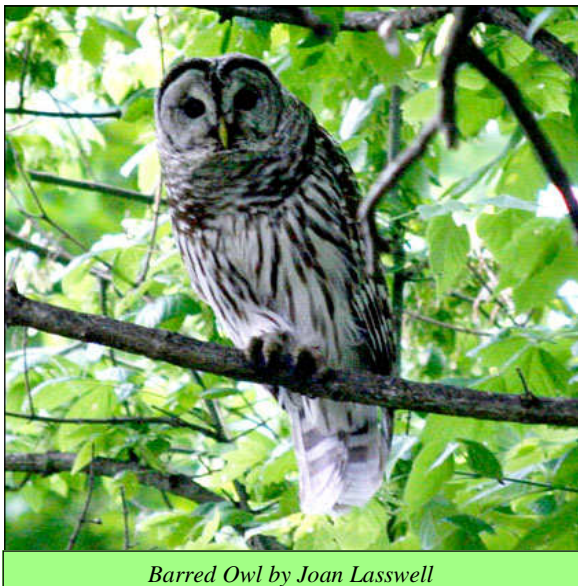
The only problem of late has been the loss of a few trees or large branches. Alamo Heights has been to the trails twice the past month to cut a very large amount of debris from the trails. Dick and I had just been under a huge oak minutes before a huge branch fell. We heard it fall when we were in the parking lot.

Between Jack Eitnrear, Georgina Swartz and Dick Bartels we have managed to keep our plants alive near the trail house. The newly planted Hop tree has suffered though and lost a main branch. It should be fine with more loving care.

The hummingbird feeder has been used very frequently. I was able to stand on the porch next to the feeder as two females were drinking.

The July 4, picnic was attended by 17 members and six guests. Although it was hot at the 5:30 PM get together, the food and chit chat were enjoyed by all. ❁

~Shirley Bartels, JNT chairman



Barred Owl by Joan Lasswell

### SAAS Board of Directors Meeting

**August 25, Tuesday, 6:30 PM**

Meet at the Carlyle Condominium, 7887 Broadway.  
Info: Barbara Kyse, 824-8884, [bkyse@msn.com](mailto:bkyse@msn.com).

## Meet the New Editor: Lora Reynolds



Lora Reynolds has been self-employed as a writer since 1994. Prior to starting her own business, she worked in corporate marketing and public relations. She earned her B.A. degree in print journalism from Trinity University. Her tenure as editor begins with the September issue of the SAAS News.

### San Antonio Audubon Society

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San Antonio TX 78209-5710

[info@saaudubon.org](mailto:info@saaudubon.org)

[www.saaudubon.org](http://www.saaudubon.org)

#### Officers

Barbara Kyse, President  
Sandi Wheeler, Vice President  
Gail Nickel,  
Secretary  
Patsy Inglet,  
Treasurer

#### Directors-at-Large

Mariann Golden  
Sheridan Coffey  
Jerry Coleman  
Tim Katafias  
Mike Sims

#### Committee

##### Chairmen

Bird Records,  
Sheridan Coffey ----- [birdreports@saaudubon.org](mailto:birdreports@saaudubon.org)  
Conservation  
Education Committee-----[info@saaudubon.org](mailto:info@saaudubon.org)  
Field Trips,  
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**SAAS  
NEEDS  
YOU TO  
VOLUNTEER!**

**Contact:**

**Barbara Kyse at  
(210) 824-8884 or**

**[info@saaudubon.org](mailto:info@saaudubon.org)**

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Check one:

- Individual (\$15 per year)  Junior, under 18 (\$7 per year)  
 Couple (\$20 per year)  Family (\$25 per year)  
 Life: Individual (\$200)  Life: Couple (\$300)  
 Contributing (minimum of \$30 per year)

Would you like to save money for the club and receive your newsletter via e-mail each month (faster and in color)?

Yes  No

Donations: Sanctuary Fund \_\_\_\_\_

Judson Nature Trail \_\_\_\_\_

How did you find out about us? \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to: **San Antonio Audubon Society**. Send dues and address changes to: ATTN MEMBERSHIP, SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON SOCIETY, 5150 BROADWAY #257, SAN ANTONIO TX 78209-5710; or **join online** using a credit card or PayPal by going to: [www.saaudubon.org/membership.html](http://www.saaudubon.org/membership.html). Email contact: <members@saaudubon.org>

## MONTHLY MEETING

Thursday, August 6, 2009, 7:00 PM

**Presenter: Cecilia M. Riley**

Executive Director  
Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

### “Linking the Land, Birds, and People of the Gulf of Mexico Region”

Ms Riley is a native Texan, biologist and avid bird watcher. Before coming to the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, Cecilia spent 2 years as the state coordinator for Texas Partners in Flight and 8 years as a research associate of marine studies at the University of Texas Marine Science Institute in Port Aransas. Currently, Cecilia's professional efforts focus on the conservation issues associated with the protection of migratory songbirds and stopover habitat in the ecologically important Gulf of Mexico region.

**Lion's Field, 2809 Broadway**  
(Mulberry at Broadway)